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ABSTRACT

This guide describes "Parent Power," a program designed to help parents help their children become better readers. The guide makes such suggestions as pre-reading the book before reading it to children; reading about a variety of subjects; and showing children the importance of reading by parents reading and modeling the reading process themselves. The guide contains sections entitled: (1) What Is Parent Power; (2) The Parent's Role; (3) How To Implement the Parent Power Program; (4) Parent Power, Preschool through Second Grade; (5) Parent Power, Third Grade through Sixth Grade; and (6) Suggested Authors. The guide's fourth and fifth sections are divided into sub-sections for getting started, using Parent Power techniques, and increasing comprehension. (CR)

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PARENT POWER - Helping Your Child Become A Better Reader

by

Sue J. Evans

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About the Author

Sue J. Evans is an educator with twenty-five years of classroom experience, a Chapter 1 teacher, and a tutor instructing first through twelfth grade students. She is working on her masters degree in Reading at Indiana University. She also makes presentations and conducts workshops teaching parents ways to use children's books to make for stronger families ties, foster greater communication, enhance children's self esteem, and bolster academic performance.

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DID YOU KNOW?

***Children who are read to do better in school.**

***Children who are read to have higher achievement test scores.**

***Children who are read to have greater reading ability.**

***Children who are read to have more self-esteem and confidence.**

***Children will read on their own a book that has been read aloud to them.**

HOW TO MAKE BOOKS CENTRAL TO THE FAMILY'S DAILY LIFE

1. **Sprinkling books around wherever your child happens to be.**

2. **Letting your child see you read.**

3. **Begin <u>PARENT POWER</u>, a home reading program described in the following practical, research based material.**

PARENT POWER - HELPING YOUR CHILD BECOME A BETTER READER

designed by
Sue J. Evans

Throughout my career as an educator many concerned and caring parents, such as yourself, have asked the same question, "What can I do to help my child become a better reader?" Parents want, deserve, and need answers to this question. Your desire to help and your need for information is evident. Parents would say to me, "You teachers know something that we don't." Generally speaking, that is true. So what is it that you, the caring and concerned parent, can do to help your child become a better reader and enjoy books?

PARENT POWER is designed to answer this question. It is a powerful approach to reading which involves you, the parent, and your child in a daily, sit down, relaxed sharing time in which you read to your child. PARENT POWER is available to anyone who wishes to set aside the time it takes - ten to twenty minutes a day - to read to that special child. PARENT POWER costs nothing because books to read can be found free of charge in any public library.

PARENT POWER empowers you to help your child become a better reader. You will learn techniques which encourage an interest in books and instill a love for reading in your child. As a parent, you realize that reading is an essential lifelong skill, one which will assist your child in all areas of life.

With twenty plus years experience both as a classroom teacher and as a reading lab teacher and, by owning and operating a private tutoring service offering remedial and enrichment instruction in reading and writing, I feel qualified to present PARENT POWER.

This guide is written in direct response to you, the parents, who wish to become actively involved in your child's reading progress. PARENT POWER enables you to provide support for the most important people in your life - your children.

The following information and techniques are based upon my twenty years of practical classroom, tutorial experience, and working with parents of my many students. Also, being a parent of two, a girl and a boy, give me additional insight into the needs of parents who wish to assist their child in becoming a better reader.

In addition, the research material used was made available through Indiana University Extended Studies where Carl Smith, Ph.D., is a professor of education. Dr. Smith is a leading authority on reading and children's literature. He has written more than 20 books for teachers and parens. He is also the founder and director of the Family Literacy Center, as well as

director of the federally funded ERIC Clearinghouse for Reading, English and Communication ~~skills~~.

Many parents are concerned and really want to help their child but do not know how. PARENT POWER explains in a clear and concise manner how and why they should be involved. Most parents do not know where to start, what to do, what methods to use, or which books to read. In order to encourage children to become better readers, we parents can use PARENT POWER which emphasizes an interactive at-home program and encourages leisure reading.

Most parents are under the impression that their children spend much of their day at school reading. However, research shows that most children read more at home than at school. That is a really scary thought if your child reads little to none at home.

Using PARENT POWER you will give your children the appropriate atmosphere and opportunity for reading. You will also encourage leisure reading and foster a love for reading. We teachers can teach children HOW to read, but who is going to get them to want to read? YOU ARE!

Reading to your children helps them to become more confident when reading. It makes perfect sense that their scores on achievement tests are higher than those children whose parents don't read to them. As parents you do have more power than perhaps you realize. Not only will PARENT POWER help you to increase your child's level of comprehension, but also their interest in books and reading. The time you spend with your

child is a gift to be treasured for years to come. This time together is something money can't buy.

As you read, you will share joy, heartbreak, excitement, suspense, giggles, hope and much more. Your child will enjoy not only the story and the characters, but the exchange of ideas which will result from reading together,

Regardless of your child's age, it is never too late to start PARENT POWER. You can begin today to read to your child on a daily basis and to affect your child's attitude toward books and reading, Now that you are armed with the information you have long awaited, use it, and flex your PARENT POWER.

It is my hope that you and yours share many wonderful stories and memorable moments.

THE PARENTS' ROLE

What is your job in PARENT POWER? Your first responsibility is to read daily to your child. Make reading a priority. Secondly, setting the tone and emotional climate are important. Displaying patience, demonstrating a genuine interest in reading to your child are all important aspects of your job. PARENT POWER should be conducted in a relaxed, pleasant manner in which you display respect for your child's comments, ideas, and responses to your questions. DO NOT make PARENT POWER a chore that has to be done, but present it in such a manner that your child looks forward to the time you read together.

When you use PARENT POWER your efforts will be well rewarded as demonstrated by the following list of research proven benefits.

PARENT POWER ENCOURAGES:

higher achievement levels in reading
increased comprehension skills
greater reading ability
increased literal and inferential comprehension skills
development of thinking skills
understanding of sounds of letters
mastery of new word meanings
understanding of complex sentences
development of thinking abilities
increased listening ability

increased speaking vocabulary

increased written skills

viewing reading as a valued activity

usage of variety of sentence patterns

stimulation of imagination

a desire for books

a desire for reading

opportunity for employment

development of appreciation for literature

an exchange of ideas

a positive attitude toward books and reading

opportunities for closeness with family

confidence in reading

an interest in reading

HOW TO IMPLEMENT PARENT POWER

PARENT POWER is made up of a number of components. A blend of the following considerations is necessary for your program to be successful. However, it is up to you as how to blend the following components. You know your children better than anyone. You are aware of their interests, emotional needs, and attention span. These necessary components are:

1. Condition children to listen
2. Pre-reading the material
3. Required amount of time
4. Variety of materials
5. Availability of materials
6. Modeling
7. Interactive reading practices

Conditioning Children to Listen

The capacity to listen is an acquired taste. It requires patience and self-discipline. If your children are not accustomed to being read to, they have to be conditioned. This demands a training period. Start with short sessions and build to longer sessions. Young children should begin with single picture books and older children by using short stories, then proceed to longer books.

Your own judgment and the attention of your children will indicate your next move. Stay with shorter stories if their attention span is short.

Pre-reading Material

You should pre-read the book before reading it to your children. The story line may be too intense or emotionally inappropriate. Your child may not be able to make the distinction between fact and fiction. Pre-reading also allows you to practice expression when reading. Changing your tone of voice with dialogue, inserting sound effects when appropriate, pre-reading also allows you to read with more confidence.

Amount of Time

PARENT POWER requires a commitment on your part. Research has shown that reading to your child four times a week for approximately 10 minutes a day will increase achievement test scores and produce positive attitudes in reading. Reading on a daily basis should bring even greater results. Therefore, it is up to you to schedule the necessary time each day and make PARENT POWER a priority.

Variety of Materials

At home as well as in the classroom children enjoy reading about a variety of subjects. Following the reading of a longer novel, read a series of short stories. Types of books include historical fiction, biographical, science fiction, animal, humorous, and mystery. Also, adventure, fantasy, poetry, and sports stories all provide variety. Your children may find a favorite author and want you to read other books by that author. See reading lists on pages 20-26, 31-39.

Availability of Materials

PARENT POWER encourages the availability of a variety of reading material. There are a number of inexpensive or free ways to do this. You can make a greater use of the public library, using the school or classroom library. Calling the public library and arranging for the bookmobile to come to your home is a convenient and free service available to you. Additional methods of acquiring reading materials include borrowing or swapping books with friends. Second-hand bookstores, yard sales and thrift shops lend themselves to inexpensive books and reading materials. Books are an excellent gift for special occasions, treats and rewards.

Modeling

Do as I say not as I do. Many of us have heard this from a parent, guardian, or significant adult in our life. However, we know this statement is false. A most powerful tool parents have is to show children the importance of reading. Research indicates when we parents ourselves read and model the reading process, our children have more positive attitudes toward reading and higher achievement scores than children whose parents do not read.

Interactive Reading Practices

When implementing PARENT POWER be sure to discuss the stories, characters, and the action. When you ask questions that require thinking and relate the stories to daily life you are helping your child achieve higher levels of reading skills.

Encourage your children to ask questions and make comments during the reading.

Research supports that talking to your child about the story and asking questions during the reading process leads to your child's higher performance scores and reading tasks. PARENT POWER encourages you to initiate talks with your children. Ask some warm-up questions before beginning the book and a variety of types of questions during the reading. Include follow-up questions at the end of the book or story. General discussions with your child are effective interactive practices you can use to ensure greater understanding. Examples of these questions can be found in the section titled Increasing Comprehension.

In addition, your children should be encouraged to think of PARENT POWER as a thinking activity instead of a passive listening activity. One way to actively engage your children would be for you to require them to think of a question to ask at the end of the reading. Children love to see if they can trick you.

These suggestions will increase the level of reading achievement as well as enjoyment for your child. My experience has shown that reading to children must be an interactive activity if increased comprehension, enjoyment, and achievement is expected.

HOW TO FIND THE TIME

Now that you have read the research and evidence that supports the importance of reading to your child, the question "How to find time" needs to be addressed. In our busy lives, we parents are working, trying to make a living for our families. We have little or no leisure time. So, when do we find the time for PARENT POWER?

My answer to that is straightforward. PARENT POWER is an investment in your child's educational future. It fosters good attitudes toward reading and learning. The time spent together sharing stories, characters, adventures, and feelings enhance the relationship between parent and child. Can we as parents honestly forego this opportunity?

PARENT POWER - LET'S DO IT!!

In an effort to provide you, the parent, with age-appropriate information, PARENT POWER has been divided into two categories: Preschool through 2nd grade and grades 3 through 6. However, do not always go by grade level when selecting books to read. Your second grader may enjoy books from the third grade level or a third grader might enjoy books from the second grade level.

Preschool - 2nd grade--see pages 13-26

3rd grade - 6th grade--see pages 26-39.

PRESCHOOL - GRADE 2

Picture books, which are favorites of younger children, are easily read in one sitting. Don't be surprised if you have to read the book a second or third time!!

As a parent you must take into consideration your child's interest, maturity, and attention span when selecting books. As you make these discoveries and your child grows older, you will want to move from picture books to short chapter books. At a later time your child may express an interest to go to longer chapter books. There is no rush, however, to move out of picture books. We tend to take picture books away from children too early. Let your child's interest serve as a guide to the selection of reading material.

GETTING STARTED

*Start reading to children when they are at an early age However, no matter your child's age, it is never too late to start.

*Condition children to listen. The art of listening is an acquired one. Start with short periods of time and progress to longer sessions.

*Respect your child's feeling and desires. You may want to offer a choice of books to be read. Sometimes this age child will want to listen, read to you, take turns reading, or reread the page you just read. All of these are fine IF it is your child's idea. Don't pressure your child to read. Your role

in PARENT POWER is to provide a comfortable sharing time in which you read to your child. Don't turn it into a formal lesson in which you demand answers to fifty million questions. People get upset, and this defeats the purpose of PARENT POWER.

*Length of reading sessions depends on the age and the attention span of the child involved. Picture books are easily read in one sitting.

*Use a variety of reading material:

Predictable and repetitive books help to develop reading and comprehension skills. (See list of titles on pages 20-25). Wordless books allow the child the opportunity to create the story. The story may change each time he/she tells it. (See list of titles on pages 21-22.)

*Pre-read material before reading to the child. Always read ahead.

*If you are not genuinely enjoying the story, your child will get the message that reading is a task or is a tiresome labor.

TIPS

To get your children excited and looking forward to PARENT POWER I would ask you to look at the following approaches.

Compare:

1. You are going to sit here and listen to me whether you like it or not.

OR

2. I look forward everyday to our special time together.

As you can see the second approach is the best. This makes your child feel important, special, and cared for.

This would be an excellent way to get your children involved and supportive of this daily reading time.

1. We are reading daily because it will make you a better reader, and it will make you smarter.

OR

2. We are reading together because I want to share good stories and good times with you.

Eventhough the first explanation is true, it sounds too much like work. The second response is positive and is child centered, thus demonstrating your desire to spend time with your child.

1. You must sit up and not speak while I read to you.

OR

2. Get comfortable and feel free to ask questions or make comments whenever you want.

This is not a formal instructional setting. If you try to make this into a reading lesson you will assure loss of interest and even turn reading into an unpleasant activity.

1. You are going to listen. I don't care if your favorite TV show is on.

OR

2. I am glad we were able to agree on a time when we're all ready to listen.

Few of us can compete with our children's favorite TV show. Schedule PARENT POWER at a time that doesn't present a conflict.

PARENT POWER READING TECHNIQUES

*Use plenty of expression when reading. Change the tone of voice with the dialogue.

*Read with the appropriate emotion in your voice and facial expression.

*Read slowly! Read slowly enough to give your child time to make mental pictures or to enjoy the pictures in the book. A word of caution: Don't read so slowly that the child loses interest or you lose expression.

*Be sure the child can see the pictures. Take time to discuss the action, characters, etc., being portrayed in the illustration.

INCREASING COMPREHENSION

*Ask warm-up questions before reading.

Examples: What does the picture on the cover tell about the book? What do you think this story is about?

*Avoid asking a child if they understand the meaning of a specific word. Most will be understood as the story

unfolds.

*Initiate talks and ask questions during the story. Encourage the child to respond to what is being read.

*QUESTIONS SHOULD BE PRESENTED TO YOUR CHILD IN AN INFORMAL NON-PRESSURED MANNER. This is a discussion, not a quiz! The open-ended questions give your child an opportunity to THINK. There is no RIGHT or THE answer. Respect your child's efforts and answers.

*Encourage the child to think of his/her on questions to be asked after the reading.

*Ask follow-up questions after reading. Who, what, when where, and why questions make for a variety and different types of questions.

*Higher level thinking questions: This type of questioning encourages development of higher level thinking skills. There are no "right" answers. Questions such as these are open-ended. This requires the child to respond with more than a simple, one-word answer. Open-ended questions are more thought provoking than those that only call for factual information from the story. It would be a mistake to ask all factual or all open-ended questions. A balance of the two types would be the best approach. A word of caution: Ask several factual and open-ended questions. Too much questioning will take the fun out of the activity, thus defeating the purpose of reading in the first place. Don't

ask all of the following questions. Select two or three to ask. Examples of open-ended questions are:

1. Put yourself in the main character's (or another character's) place. What would you do differently? Why?
2. How would the story be different if you told it from another character's point of view?
3. If you were the author how would you change the story?
4. How could the ending be different?
5. How could the story/book be improved?
6. How would the story be different if set in another time (earlier/later)?
7. Why do you think the author wrote the book?
8. What did you like best about the book?
9. What did you like least about the book?
10. Why do you think the author wanted people to read this story?

KEYS TO SUCCESS

*Read everyday. Make this activity a priority. Set aside at least one special time each day to read. If you don't read everyday, you will lost interest in the story.

*If you start a book, it is your responsibility to follow through on it. However, if the book is not being enjoyed, by all means STOP! Select another book.

*Ask teachers, librarians, and other parents to recommend read aloud books. Also, see the reading list in this guide.

*If reading a chapter book, stop at a suspenseful or interesting place in the story to keep your child looking forward to tomorrow's reading.

*Reading time should be an enjoyable and pleasant family time.

*Set the tone with your genuine interest and enthusiasm.

*Let your child see you reading at other times for your personal enjoyment.

*Encourage interactive conversation during the reading. You want to discuss the pictures or story as you go along.

*Never use the threat of withholding the reading family time as punishment.

*Schedule reading sessions so it does not conflict with the child's other activities. The purpose of PARENT POWER is to make your child want to read, so don't take your child from an enjoyable activity to make them sit and listen to you read.

*Don't schedule reading sessions at the same time of your child's favorite television program.

*Regulate the amount of time your child spends in front of the television.

GETTING STARTED - GRADES THREE THROUGH SIX

As your child moves out of picture books into chapter books, begin with shorter chapter books. Ask the child which he or she prefers at the time. Let the child's interest serve as a guide to the selection of reading materials. We tend to take picture books away from children too early. Even 5th and 6th grade children enjoy a picture book from time to time.

*Start reading to your children. It is never too late to begin PARENT POWER.

*Condition your children to listen. The art of listening is an acquired one. Start with short periods of time and progress to longer sessions. Before you know it you will be asked to read more!

*The length of your reading sessions depends on the age and the attention span of your child. When your child's attention wanders, ask yourself, "Has the session been too long? Is the book not being enjoyed?" Make the appropriate adjustments.

*Respect your child's feeling and desires. You may want to offer a choice of books to be read. Sometimes this age child will want to listen, read to you, take turns reading, or reread the page you just read. All of these are fine IF it is your child's idea. Don't pressure your child to read. Your role in PARENT POWER is to provide a comfortable sharing time in which you read to your child. Don't turn it into a formal lesson in which you demand answers to fifty million questions. People get upset, and this defeats the purpose of PARENT POWER.

*Use a variety of materials. Included in this section is a list of suggested authors and book titles.

*Pre-read material before reading to your child. This allows you to practice expression when reading. Changing your tone of voice with dialogue, inserting sound effects when appropriate, rereading also allowing you to read with more confidence accenting important passages or omitting some parts.

*If you are not genuinely enjoying the story, your child WILL get the message that reading is a task or is a tiresome labor.

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Examples: What does the picture on the cover tell about the book? What do you think this story is about?1

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*Encourage the child to think of his/her own questions to be asked after the reading.

*Ask follow-up questions after reading. What, what, when, where, and why questions make for a variety and different types of questions.

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1. Put yourself in the main character's or another character's place. What would you do differently? Why?
2. How would the story be different if you told it from another character's point of view?
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SUGGESTED AUTHORS

Preschool through primary ages

Chris Van Allsburg
Jan and Stan Berenstain
Eric Carle
Roald Dahl
Marjorie Flack
Don Freeman
Paul Galdone
Erza Jack Keats
Arnold Lobel
Bill Martin
Mercer Mayer
Peggy Parish
Maurice Sendak
Dr. Suess
Jim Tealease - Hey! Listen To This!

Grades Three Through Six

Lloyd Alexander
Chris Van Allsburg
Lynn Reid Banks
Betsy Byars
Beverly Cleary
James Lincoln Collier and Christopher Collier
Roald Dahl
Walter Farley
Russell Freedman
John Fritz
C. S. Lewis
Scott O'Dell
Robert Peck
Gary Paulsen
Shel Silverstein
Eleanora E. Tate
Laura Ingalls Wilder

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